

The LOVE LETTERS of the NEW "COMPANION" of "LOVE BUNGALOW"



BY WINIFRED VAN DUZER.

DOES happiness exist without the law? The man and the woman who snap their fingers at convention and turn their backs upon "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" of the ages—are they happy? Is their isolation down-pink and nepenthic with rose fragrance? Or do faces hover, like shadows, round their fireside; weary faces, wondering baby faces, snoring averted faces, all with accusing eyes? They shut out the world; can they shut out accusing eyes?

What is "realization of self"? Is it stripping the soul of all that clings, all the softening beauty that surrounds, until the soul stands like a bleak column above a ruin, for all to see? Can happiness live over a ruin? Will love, which is constructive, survive destruction?

The woman loves exultingly, joyful with pure joy of loving; blindly, seeing not reality, not consequence; recklessly, spite of heaven and hell, for in the heart of her soul there is neither law nor conception of law.

The man loves with reservations. The curl of an eyelash, the patter of rain, sends his heart racing or binds him with inertia. He is sensitive to externals as a photographic plate; the voice of condemnation irritates and though he fights gleefully, he cannot endure.

The world pounding at the door of his seclusion, demanding the woman to be stoned, blaming less than ridiculing—will not the voice of the world drive away love? And without love can there be happiness in the empty chambers of his life?

Will the woman who lives by him and for him be happy, seeing him unhappy?

TALIESIN is open again. Frank Lloyd Wright, architect, artist, eccentric, philosopher, romancer and seeker after the absolute, so christened his bizarre and beautiful country home on the Wisconsin river near Spring Green, Wis., after Taliesin, son of St. Henwig, chief of the bards in the time of King Arthur. The world which sneers at his door as it goes by calls the bungalow "Love Castle." But Wright cares little for the world.

In Oak Park lives a little woman, sweet-faced and thoughtful-eyed. And though her lips are sad they smile, for time saps the venom from bitterness; her six children are about her; she has friends. She bears Wright's name. The marriage tie binds, yet there stretches between her husband and her life a chasm never to be bridged. Time and crime and tragedy have dug the space. Now there hangs over it a beautiful, mobile face with luminous eyes. For once again Wright is seeking realization of his ideal.

Maud Miriam Noel, sculptress and member of the French Academy, is that hybrid—a woman of beauty and intellect. She divided a prize in Paris last year in an artists' contest, with Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, also last year she translated into French for a Parisian review Henry George's "Progress and Poverty." She has lived in Paris; she has traveled; her ideas, viewpoint, manner show the influence of education and experience.

Her beauty is subtle, all expression, entirely spirituelle. The dark eyes which light with changing thought and glow with sustained feeling are beautifully set under arching brows; the lips are joyous and wistful; the curved line of cheek and chin is child-like; the dark hair is careless and fluffy about her head, like the crown of youth. And her voice is like her eyes.

Who is Mrs. Noel? Where did she come from? When? No one knows. She is wrapped round with mystery, inscrutable as the sphinx. And like the sphinx she is silent. Wright met her a year ago—or was it two years ago? Her letters to him, which the public has read, show that he once caused her grief. But when autumn frosts were tinting the shores of Lake Michigan, the lovely stranger went to Taliesin to establish a "spiritual" hegira with the lover of beauty. They can never marry; they are experiencing the fulfillment of union without the law with no compensating possibility of making it right, for Mrs. Wright will never allow her husband a divorce. But they have thrown scorn to society, convention, law, the future; they are living their lives; they expect happiness; as the world goes by they are quite willing to be outcast if they be outcast together.

Their life together has already been marred by Mrs. Nellie Breen, a discharged servant, who stole Mrs. Noel's letters to Wright and sold them to a newspaper. To destroy the liaison for the benefit of Wright's children, she said, Mrs. Breen set federal investigators on the affair, hoping to base prosecution on violation of the Mann act. As no commercial element was indicated, officials refused to make a grand jury case. Wright speaks of Mrs. Breen as a "blackmailing, venal, scandal mongering domestic." He rails bitterly against the public's attitude toward his affairs.

"What has been most precious to me," he said, "has been stolen, stripped or whipped from me—sung under foot to satisfy the man on the street. I cannot realize that my love or friendship for a woman, or a woman's love or friendship for me is a public concern. The public has been asked for exactly nothing in relation to my obligations in any such connection."

"Society is not menaced by anything that stands openly upon its merits or demerits. Society, law, and the press



Mrs. MAUD MIRIAM NOEL.

should not meddle with the personal, intimate affairs of nature—responsible men and women who live according to their own ideals."

To the companion of his hegira, Wright pays his compliments thus:

"She is the most brilliantly intellectual woman I ever knew. She is wonderful, not only as a literary woman, but as an artist."

And Madame's explanation to the world, carefully prepared, is this:

"Because I love Frank Lloyd Wright, and admire him more than all men, and honor the life he has lived, I am here at Taliesin, the beautiful country home. I understand and deeply sympathize with the struggles and terrible trials his life and his great work have passed through. Now, because of my deep love for him, he is again subjected to persecution."

"My real faith in him has never wavered, but we have passed through deep waters together. I believe now, as then, that great as the artist is the man is greater, but in attempting to have him understand my ideals I have at times been little his—have been unfair and impatient in my criticism of him, as he has been unkind and impatient in his criticism of me."

"Our struggles with each other have only drawn us closer together. It is easy to worship a hero in him; I could too easily. Our love must be a great, vital, living thing, standing by its own strength, protected by its own virtue."

"I am no advocate of any theories of sex idealism. The only hope of liberation must come not through intellectual concepts or rational propositions, but only through the illumination of the spiritual consciousness. If there is any justification of my position here it is that the work we hope to do together and the strength we can give each other are more important than a form which in Mr. Wright's life has become obsolete."

Wright spoke further on love and marriage. "Such phrases as 'free love,' 'personal liberty,' and 'the freedom of the individual,' have been worn threadbare," he said. "It would be speaking in commonplaces to use these worn-out terms to describe the present situation of myself and Mrs. Noel. I call it merely a common sense arrangement, entered into by two persons who have reached a certain maturity of wisdom, who love each other, and who have courage enough



"LOVE BUNGALOW"

and character enough to dispense with old conventions, idle forms, and live their own lives in their own way."

Love is a conflagration which immolates the woman; it is a little light which the man holds to his cigarette. With visioning eyes she throws herself to the flames; the man handles the light carefully, lest it burn his fingers. For the woman it is final because it is all; for the man it is an hour from the years.

Tragedy often comes, swift and terrible, to those who live without the law. For years Mr. and Mrs. Edwin H. Cheney lived in Oak Park near the Wrights. For years they were neighbors and friends. Mrs. Cheney and Mrs. Wright

were members of the Oak Park Woman's Club, the children played together, the fathers drove together to the city every morning.

Quite suddenly Wright and Mrs. Cheney found that they lived on the same plane of thought—a plane far removed from the conventional one of their marital partners. Wright found his life confused and discordant; Mrs. Cheney discovered a "higher perception of duty." She took her children for a visit to Colorado and sent for their father to bring them home. When he arrived she had gone—to Europe. Wright joined her in New York and they toured Europe together, afterward settling in Berlin. Mrs. Wright sent her oldest son to Germany to induce his father to return—to no avail. When they returned to Chicago she refused him a divorce. Cheney obtained one, however, and Mrs. Cheney assumed her maiden name, Mamah Borthwick.

The "soul mates" found solo acts tedious. They slipped out to the bungalow at Spring Green and set up a second "spiritual hegira," taking the Cheney children along. They lived thus until August a year ago. Then came the horror which stirred the country. While the family was at luncheon a negro servant locked all but one door and set fire to the house. As the terrified woman, her children and servants rushed out, he struck each one down with a hatchet. Mamah Borthwick Cheney and her son and daughter were killed, with a draftsman and two farm servants, three others were injured. Wright, who was in his office in Chicago at the time, never quite recovered from the shock. The memory of it often rose up between him and Maud Miriam Noel, bringing them both misery, according to the letters she wrote him.

These letters sound the depths and touch the heights of love; they are prose poetry, pleading, exulting, thrilling.

"Beloved: If I could take you into the mysteries of this glorious day you would lose all your sorrow—it would fall from you like an unworthy garment. Twice three days I have spoken to no one, yet I have danced and quivered and vibrated like a ray of light. Again I feel like a rainbow, as in those first days of wooing."

"Today has been so wonderful that I seem to hold the whole universe in my breast. I have worked hard yet I dreamed of my work—no, not dreamed—realized the majesty of my own being in its perfection and reality. Later I robed myself in white and walked through the park. Oh, the summer sea! The blue night! The scent of herbs and grass and leaves! The bitter smell of older flowers. That restless throng. I think my face must have looked like the Christ as I passed through them unseeing no longer for the dim distance—for the unknown. No restless yearning—no need of companionship!"

"Oh, dear Frank, I would take your burden if I could—would dissolve it in this love that is more than peace. It is because I am not dependent on any environment that my thought breaks through the mists and my body is like a window pane through which the sun shines."

"It is love that makes me so happy. How I revel in it! Not emotionally, nor with perfect abandon because these times of supreme grandeur are so rare and so precious I fear to lose them, and that fear limits my realization."

When I think how I overflow with love for you, and how grudgingly you give to me, and how carefully you pick and choose, lest some word or feeling rise within you which might seem disloyal to the past—that worthless old past which has left you nothing but an empty, broken soul!

"My love for you seems to be almost independent of you—in spite of you. It has a strange beauty which illumines my whole consciousness. All that I am conscious of vibrates with it. There are times when it seems to be just me—all there is to me. It was so in my pain, and now in my joy."

"My poor one—starving with a feast before him—I know that I am not what you want; but I am good for you. You are nursing all the little injuries, all the poor, worthless, imaginary wrongs—standing outside in the dark."

"I love you and bless you and thrill with delight at thought of you, and fold my wings about you to keep you warm in the cold."

"Yesterday it rained all day. I walked through the park to see the Goethe statue all wet. It was lovely—the rain was pouring on hillslope and forest. Will you bring me some lavender and thyme and other scented herbs when you come in next? Not a little bit, but heaps."

"Oh, I fear all your visits to me will be disappointing—you will find little happiness with me until our ideals are united. That cannot be until you are resurrected. How can I rouse you? Awaken your life? Don't be cast down—just wait—idleness is often cumulative—the right kind brings great rewards."

"I want to be possessed by love—all that is fine and good and real in the universe. You do not—that is evident. Your spiritual development must be nil—you cannot be far removed from the savage to stand in such mortal dread of an hallucination of bondage. You must not include me in your limitations. I want you to be free by our sins, not for them. Is that why your suffering is great? Is not most of your misery at present remorse? Do you not know that you have been punished by your sins? I shall win! When the smoke of battle clears away I shall be a rainbow again—an undying flame—an altar of fire. I shall weave a rose wreath and hang it round your neck. You will call it a yoke of bondage and curse it—but no matter. You are afraid of the light."



FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

I give you; you crouch in darkness. Come, take my hand; I will lead you!

"Morning! Another radiant day is mine. Like a bird on upward wing I circle around you and heal you with the velvet of my touch. Perhaps it is well that I am not with you when I feel beautiful. I would become conscious of offending your esthetic senses. Conscious that my flesh and covering are hateful to you, as usual. That would drag me down into ugliness. How strange that I love you! There must be some unconscious perception of ultimate realities. I am larger than the wounds you have made. I do not nurse them; they are among the things I am trying to forget."

"Verily, love is love. One dies without it. What a living, vital force it is! What superb strength, what hallowed joy it gives! Thine, MIRIAM."